
Childcare Bill

Probing amendment: access to free childcare for parents in flexible or sporadic work

BARONESS PINNOCK
BARONESS TYLER OF ENFIELD

Page 3, line 2, at end insert—

““working parent” includes any individual who—

- (a) is in contracted employment for at least 8 hours work a week;*
- (b) is self-employed at a level equivalent to working 8 hours a week;*
- (c) is on a zero hours contract;*
- (d) is an apprentice;*
- (e) is engaged in education or training for a minimum of 8 hours a week;*
- (f) is a carer who qualifies for carers allowance; or*
- (g) is undertaking voluntary work or work experience for a minimum of 8 hours a week.”*

LORD TOUHIG
BARONESS JONES OF WHITCHURCH

Page 1, line 10, at end insert—

“Working parents” means—

- () parents who work a minimum of 8 hours a week each,*
- () a single parent who works 8 hours a week,*
- () a parent who is not in work but is receiving work-related training,*
- () a parent who is the main carer for a family member,*
- () a parent on a flexible working contract of an equivalent of 8 hours per week,*
- () a parent whose contract has unexpectedly ended through no fault of their own,*
- () a parent who engages regularly in voluntary work.”*

Background

The 30 hour free entitlement for three and four year olds (‘the extended free entitlement’) is only available to parents deemed ‘working’. At Second Reading, Lord Nash made clear

that this would require “each parent is working the equivalent of eight hours per week, which is the same threshold as the tax-free childcare scheme”.ⁱ

However, many working parents in the UK are not employed on contracts that offer a stable eight hours of employment each week. A recent survey conducted by the Office for National Statistics showed that there are approximately 1.4 million employee contracts in Great Britain that do not guarantee a minimum number of hours.ⁱⁱ Non-guaranteed hours contracts (NGHCs) include zero-hours contracts, but also term time working, annualised hour contracts and on-call contracts. The report shows that such contracts have become more common over time.

We believe the government must ensure that the extended entitlement is available to all parents working a reasonable number of hours. The above amendment aims to probe the government’s intentions to this effect. The government should ensure first, that parents who have a reasonable expectation of a minimum level of work in the near future can benefit from the new provision; second, that those who are currently working but do not have a stable pattern of employment can access the provision; and third; that those who have been working a reasonable number of hours in the recent past can continue to benefit from the provision.

It is also vital that the government seeks to ensure free childcare provision is available outside school term dates. Eligibility periods for the scheme should be designed in consultation with parents and with the goal of ensuring all working parents can benefit from support with childcare costs.

The government should guarantee that families with flexible and sporadic employment can fully benefit from extended provision, providing stability to their children, childcare providers and parents’ employers.

Draft probing amendment

Page 1, line 10, after (2) insert—

(2A) “Qualifying child of working parents” means a young child who—

(a) is living in a household where all parents reasonably expect to work for 8 hours in any 8 weeks of the next school term; or

(b) is living in a household where all parents reasonably expect to work for 8 hours in any 8 weeks of the current school term; or

(c) is living in a household where all parents have worked for 8 hours in any eight weeks of the preceding school term.

(2B) “School term” means a term the dates of which have been set under section 32 of the Education Act 2002.

For further details please contact Adam Butler at Family and Childcare Trust on 020 7940 7531 or adam@familyandchildcaretrust.org, or Jane Ahrends at Child Poverty Action Group on 020 7812 5216 or jahrend@cpag.org.uk

ⁱ Lords Hansard June 16th 2015 Col 1083

ⁱⁱ Office for National Statistics, *Analysis of Employee Contracts that do not Guarantee a Minimum Number of Hours*, 30th April 2014 available at http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_361578.pdf